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DEPARTMENT OF STATE

Memorandum of Conversation

DATE: March 5, 1958

MAR 20 1958

SUBJECT: Questions Regarding European Defense

PARTICIPANTS: Mr. Franz Josef Strauss, German Minister of Defense
Mr. Albrecht von Kessel, Chargé d'Affaires ad interim, German Embassy
Lt. Col. Biedermann, Staff Officer, German Army
The Secretary of State
Brig. Gen. Richard Steinback, Deputy Chief, MAAO, Germany
Mr. Jacques J. Reinstein, GER

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In welcoming Mr. Strauss, the Secretary recalled that, on the occasion of his last visit to the United States, he had been concerned with atomic energy matters. The Secretary expressed pleasure at the progress that had been made in this field with the establishment of EURATOM.

French Forces in Germany

At the end of an exchange of remarks on North Africa, Mr. Strauss said that the situation concerned the German Government in view of its effect on French forces in Germany. Although the French claim that they have 50,000 troops in Germany, as far as the Germans could figure out, there were only about 30,000. There was one armored division and another division which was not combat-worthy. The French had promised the Germans in 1956 that they would bring their troops back to Germany and had continued to hold barracks for this purpose. They had promised the same thing in 1957. He saw no immediate prospect of the troops returning. In answer to a question from the Secretary, Mr. Strauss said that the French were still retaining barracks for 80,000 to 90,000 troops in Germany, whereas they only needed space for half this amount. He said he had asked General Jacquot and Minister of Defense Chaban-Delmas to release some of the barracks to the Germans for a period of time. He said the Germans would be willing to return the barracks when the French forces return. There must be French forces in Germany not only for military, but for political reasons. It must be made clear to the Russians that there would continue to be French, British and American forces in Germany.

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British Forces in Germany

Mr. Strauss said the German Government was concerned regarding the British attitude on the United Kingdom forces in Germany. As far as the financial problem was concerned, the Germans had made a compromise offer to the British which would provide immediate budgetary assistance to the United Kingdom. However, it was impossible for the German Government to provide further support costs. It was simply not possible to get parliamentary approval for more support costs. The Government had assured the Parliament in 1956 that there would be no further support costs. It had committed itself again in 1957. It was therefore possible to provide budgetary assistance to the British only indirectly.

British Defense Thinking and NATO Policy

Mr. Strauss said that the German Government was very much concerned about the British attitude toward defense problems. It believed that the British thinking was not in line with the official NATO thinking. The British believe that military planning can be based on the assumption that either there will be no war or that there will be all-out nuclear war. He said there was a need for forces, particularly in the area facing the Russians, capable of dealing with a limited attack. This requires the maintenance of shield forces and the German Government was very much concerned at the British intention to weaken the shield forces. Mr. Strauss said the British trip-wire theory was completely unacceptable to Germany. He stressed that, while he wished to make clear the great concern of the German Government regarding British policy, he did not want the Secretary to think that this represented an anti-British attitude on his part or that the German Government was anti-British.

The Secretary said he agreed. He thought that we must be prepared to deal with limited situations without all-out war. He believed that within a short time there would be small atomic weapons which could be used in such situations. At the present time, with the danger of fallout, it was difficult to use such weapons in friendly areas. Moreover, there was a danger that radioactive particles would be blown back to our side of the line. The Secretary pointed out that the importance of continued testing of nuclear weapons lay in the possibility of the development of small, clean weapons. Mr. Strauss asked if the Secretary meant that these weapons would operate by fission. The Secretary said that he did.

The Secretary said that he felt the development of small clean weapons would change the situation. At the present time, it is very awkward. If there were, for example, an incursion into the Federal Republic, we would be confronted with the choice of attempting to repel it with the use of conventional weapons or by employing the full force of our nuclear weapons, with the consequence that Moscow, Washington and other major population centers would be destroyed. The Secretary said he did not know whether

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military experts had fully accepted the concept which he had outlined, but he had expressed it in an article which he had recently written for Foreign Affairs. In conclusion, the Secretary said he agreed with Mr. Strauss that the British trip-wire theory was not acceptable.

Mr. Strauss said that he had told Mr. Spaak that Great Britain was defended along the Elbe and not along the Channel. The British forces in Germany were there for the protection of Great Britain and not for the protection of Germany. However, he thought the whole concept of forces defending a particular area was erroneous. He thought the purpose of the NATO forces was to prevent war.

Financial Support of United Kingdom Forces in Germany

The Secretary said he was not clear as to the status of the discussions on the financing of British forces in Germany, but he hoped very much that the problem would be satisfactorily settled. Mr. Strauss said that he hoped it would be, but stressed that the Germans could not accept the ideas of the British White Paper on defense.

Nuclear Weapons

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Mr. Strauss expressed his concern that the effort of the British to develop nuclear weapons would lead to the development of these weapons in other countries. The next country would be France. He said that the Germans had tried to discourage the French from developing nuclear weapons. Should the production of these weapons continue to spread, the problem of control would become insoluble. The costs involved would be such that it would also become impossible to maintain a balanced NATO force. He said that as far as the Federal Republic was concerned, it would be quite satisfied if atomic warheads were available for use in case of emergency. The Secretary said that this was what had been agreed at the December NATO Meeting. Mr. Strauss indicated that this was what he had in mind.

Weapons Production; Collaboration between France, Germany and Italy

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Mr. Strauss emphasized the need for standardization of weapons in NATO. He said that the only standardization which had been achieved had resulted from the supply of American weapons as mutual aid. However, it was obviously not possible for one country to undertake the entire task of supplying weapons to the alliance. The Secretary said that he did not think it was a good idea for Europe to be dependent upon the United States in this regard. He said that, while he did not know what the American military had said on the subject, he knew the President had felt very strongly that it was desirable for the Germans to have a source of supply for tanks in Europe and had hoped they would buy British tanks. The Secretary said he thought that the Germans should eventually undertake the production of tanks themselves.

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Mr. Strauss said that, while it was not easy to be certain about such matters, it was apparently the thinking of the military that in another war the first thirty days would be decisive. The Secretary said he remembered much the same view being expressed in 1914. Mr. Strauss said that the same idea had been expressed at the time of Hitler's Blitzkriegs. He said nevertheless he thought that the main reliance in another war would have to be placed on existing stocks. The Secretary said this appeared to involve acceptance of the concept that the only type of war there could be was an all-out war. Mr. Strauss indicated he did not mean this. He said that he thought there should be independent national stocks sufficient for ninety days, during the period when it would be impossible to organize adequate transport. Beyond this the supply problem should be dealt with on a combined basis.

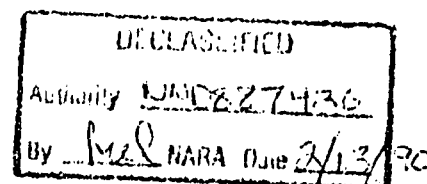
Mr. Strauss referred to the collaboration which had been undertaken by the Federal Republic, France and Italy in the field of military production. He said that it was impossible to agree on concrete projects in groups of seven, eight or fifteen countries. It could be done in a group of three countries. The Secretary said he would think that the Germans would be interested in military production in Belgium. Mr. Strauss said he agreed. He said he had told Defense Minister Spinoy that Belgium and The Netherlands would be given a complete list of the projects to be undertaken by France, Italy and Germany, with the idea that their participation would be welcome in any projects in which they were interested.

Nuclear Weapons in FIG; Atomic Propulsion

The Secretary asked whether this collaboration included nuclear weapons. Mr. Strauss said that it did not as yet. He knew that the French wanted financial support. He believed that they would wait some time before pressing the matter of cooperation in nuclear weapons production, during which they would negotiate with the United States and the United Kingdom on the subject. The Secretary said he hoped the French would not undertake the production of nuclear weapons. He thought it would be foolish for them to get involved in the expense. He remarked that some people think that if they get a Cadillac, they are moving in high society. He said France simply could not afford a nuclear weapons program. The Federal Republic and the United States had recently had to pull the French out of an extremely bad financial situation. If the Algerian war went on, their finances would continue to be strained and it was impossible to envisage a nuclear weapons program being superimposed on this situation.

Mr. Strauss said the Germans were not interested in making atomic weapons. They were interested in having them available in case of need. On the other hand, they were very much interested in all kinds of atomic propulsion. When the Soviets were able to produce atomic submarines, the defense of the Baltic Sea would be difficult. It was essential to have atomic submarines in order to prevent Soviet egress from the Baltic and

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to protect the Baltic flank. He did not think the Soviets had an atomic submarine as yet, although they probably had a prototype. He said the Germans were not ready to get into the field of atomic propulsion, but when they were, they would wish to take advantage of the offer made by the United States at the December NATO Meeting to provide the know-how. He said this was not a matter for the next two or three years, but for the mid-60's.

As he took leave of the Secretary, Mr. Strauss said he had two final things to say. One was that there was very complete and genuine cooperation between the American military authorities in Germany and the German defense authorities. He expressed great satisfaction with this cooperation. The other thing was to convey the Chancellor's very warm greetings to the Secretary. The Secretary remarked that he had had a very nice birthday greeting from the Chancellor several days previously.


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